

Unit 6: Acts

- Week 1: Introduction + (The Ascension and Pentecost)
- Week 2: The Beginning of Evangelism until the arrest of St. Stephen
- Week 3: The Persecution of the Church in Jerusalem
- Week 4: Beginning of missionary trips
- Week 5: St. Paul's trials

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- **Brief introduction about St. Luke and the Book of Acts:**

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- **Introduction:**

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 - A clear record of the ministry of Peter and Paul.
 - Demonstrates the behavior of the early Christians as high examples for us.
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- **Outline**

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Includes the selection of Matthias and the worship of the Church.
- **Chapters 2-7** – *The Beginning of Evangelism until the Martyrdom of Stephen:*
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lame man, threats against the apostles, the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the imprisonment of the apostles, the selection of seven deacons, and the stoning of Stephen.

- **Chapters 8-12** – *The Persecution of the Church in Jerusalem:*

Includes the faith of the Ethiopian eunuch, the conversions of Paul and Cornelius, the founding of the Church in Caesarea, the martyrdom of James, the imprisonment of Peter, and the death of Herod.

- **Chapters 13-15** – *The Evangelism of Paul and Barnabas Until Their Separation:*

Includes the story of Elymas the sorcerer, the Church in Antioch, the healing of the lame man in Lystra, the stoning of Paul, and the First Council of Jerusalem.

- **Chapters 16-20** – *Paul's Preaching in Europe*

- **Chapters 21-28** – *Paul's Trials:*

Includes his journey to Jerusalem, his arrest and transfer to stand trial in Rome, his trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, the shipwreck in Malta, and finally his arrival in Rome and preaching there for two years.

- **Reading:**

- Chapter 1

- **Resources:**

- [The Book of Acts - Fr. Daoud Lamei English](#)

- **Key verse:**

- "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." *Acts 1:8*

- **Comments:**

- **Chapter 1:**

- **From the Resurrection to the Ascension (Acts 1:1-9):**

- **To Theophilus**, whose name means *Lover of God*.
- **In verse 1:** "began to Do and teach": Our Lord Jesus *acted before He taught*, because speaking is easy, but acting—especially accomplishing redemption—is what truly matters.
- **In verse 3:** Our Lord Jesus confirmed His resurrection by appearing to His disciples and to those who believed in Him. He proved He was alive by eating with them, letting them touch Him, speaking with them, and breaking bread with them.
- Our Lord Jesus instructed the disciples to return to Jerusalem and stay there and wait for the Holy Spirit. He assured them that the coming of the Holy Spirit on them would be accompanied by **great power** in both spiritual life and ministry.
- **In verse 9:** The Lord ascended **in His body** during the day **before His disciples**, so they could be certain of His ascension.
 - The **cloud** in this verse symbolizes the **presence of God**, just as it did when Moses received the commandments, or when the cloud covered the **Tabernacle** and also as happened during the

Transfiguration.

- **The Ascension and the Return to the Upper Room (Acts 1:10-14):**
 - After the ascension, two angels suddenly appeared before the disciples, in the form of men dressed in white garments. They informed the disciples that Christ will come again on the Day of Judgment.
 - The disciples **returned to Jerusalem** after the ascension of Christ, which took place at **the Mount of Olives**.
 - They continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication in the Upper Room at the house of St. Mark the Apostle, in **spiritual unity**.
 - **Contemplation:** It is very important to pray with spiritual unity and one heart in our homes and churches, so that the Lord may support us.
- **The Selection of Matthias (Acts 1:15-26):**
 - St. Peter saw the need to choose a **replacement for Judas**, someone who had been **close to Christ** and had **learned from Him throughout His earthly ministry**.
 - The disciples **nominated two men, Justus and Matthias**, then **cast lots**, and **God chose Matthias** to preach in the name of Christ.
- **Chapter 2:**
 - **The Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13)**
 - The Feast of Pentecost was one of the three major feasts for the Jews — Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles — during which all males were required to be in Jerusalem at the Temple.
 - In the house of **St. Mark**, a **sound like that of a rushing wind** was heard — but it came **from above**, Something **like fire appeared**, taking the form of **divided tongues**, which hovered in the air and then **rested on the head of each person** present in the upper room.
 - The fire symbolized **purification and power**
 - Three miracles took place:
 1. **The sound of the wind,**
 2. **The appearance of fiery tongues,**
 3. **Speaking in tongues**
 - The disciples left the upper room and spoke in foreign languages, astonishing the crowds. Though uneducated, they fluently spoke the native tongues of listeners from other nations, proclaiming God's message.
 - **Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14-36):**
 - Here we see Peter, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit from fear to boldness
 - In verse 17:
 - **"All flesh"** refers to both Jews and Gentiles—everyone who believes in Christ.
 - **"Shall prophesy"** means they will speak about Christ's redemption, His kingdom, and the need to prepare for it.
 - **"Visions"** refers to spiritual scenes seen while awake.
 - **Verse 21:** "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved."

- Some people believe that just calling out to God is enough to be saved, but this verse tells us that true salvation comes through faith in Jesus and by following the teachings of the Church, like baptism, communion, and prayer. We can not separate this verse from other biblical verses.
- **Verses 24-28:** Saint Peter the Apostle quotes the prophecy of David the Prophet, which David did not mean for himself, but spoke through the voice of Christ.
- **Verses 31-33:** St. Peter is boldly telling the people that Jesus, whom they had rejected and crucified, is actually the **Lord (God)** and the **Christ (Messiah or Savior)**
- **The Faith and Baptism of the Crowds (Verses 37-41)**
 - St. Peter asked the people to:
 1. **Repent** – Turn away from their sins and change their lives.
 2. **Believe in Jesus Christ** – Have faith in Him as the Savior, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
 3. **Be baptized** – Accept the sacrament of baptism.
- **The Life of the Early Church (Verses 42-47):**
 - Listening to the teachings of the apostles.
 - Fellowship, which is the love feast that expresses unity.
 - Breaking of bread, meaning partaking of the Lord's body and blood.
 - Liturgical prayers, meaning the Divine Liturgy.

1. Review/recap questions

** Servant may add more questions

8. Homework

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Week 2: The Beginning of Evangelism until the arrest of St. Stephen

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Includes his journey to Jerusalem, his arrest and transfer to stand trial in Rome, his trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, the shipwreck in Malta, and finally his arrival in Rome and preaching there for two years.
- **Reading:**
 - Chapter 3-6
 - Read chapter 3 from 1-19
 - Read Chapter 4 from 3-31
 - Read Chapter 5 from 1-31
 - Read Chapter 6 from 1-8
- **Resources:**
 - The Book of Acts - Fr. Daoud Lamei English
- **Key verse:**
 - "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29
- **Comments:**
 - **Chapter 3: 1-19, 4:37, 5:42, 6:15,**
 - **The Miracle (Acts 3: 1-10)**
 - The Jews used to pray three times a day: the third hour (9 AM), the sixth hour (12 PM), and the ninth hour (3 PM). In its early days, the early Church used to pray at the same times in Solomon's Porch at the temple, but of course without participating in its sacrifices. This continued until the prayers of the Agpeya were established around the fourth century."
 - **Peter and John:** These two disciples were connected together from the beginning of Christ's calling to them and were present together at special events such as the Transfiguration, the raising of Jairus's daughter, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and by the Sea of Tiberias."
 - Peter and John used the power of Christ and asked for the man healing in our Lord Jesus Christ name

- **Preaching (Acts 3:11-19):**
 - St. Peter took advantage of the crowd that had gathered to witness the miracle, and responded to the people's questions. He strongly emphasized that **neither he nor John were the source of the healing miracle, but rather it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.**
 - **Contemplation:** If you do something good and others praise you for it, thank God and redirect the glory to Him, so that you may fade away while He is revealed."
 - **Verse 19:** What was required of them then, and of us now is: repentance, turning away from sinful behavior, and confessing the faith in order to receive baptism and the forgiveness of sins.
Spiritual relief comes from the presence of God, because the Jews expected the coming of the Messiah to bring material relief and deliverance from the Romans. But what is meant here is spiritual relief deliverance from the hand of Satan."
- **Chapter 4: read from verse 3-31**
 - **The trial of Peter and John (Acts 4: 3-19)**
 - The three groups that made up the Sanhedrin gathered: the rulers, meaning the priests; the elders, meaning the heads of the tribes; and the scribes, meaning the scholars and teachers. They gathered in Jerusalem to put the two apostles on trial.
 - They asked about the source of the power by which the miracle was done and the name through which it was performed was repeated—not because they were unaware of the answer, but to find an opportunity in the response to accuse the apostles and punish them.
 - **Verse 8:** Here the Lord's promise is fulfilled (Matthew 10:19-20), that when a Christian is put on trial for the sake of faith, the Holy Spirit will speak through him.
 - **The Cornerstone:** It means that Christ is the foundation of salvation for humanity, and there is no other.
 - Thus, they were released without punishment out of fear of the people, who were glorifying God for the miracle—especially since the man had been sick for over forty years.
 - **Contemplation:** Remind yourself always with this verse " *Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you (the world) more than to God, you judge.*"
 - **The prayer of the apostles (Acts 4:23-31):**
 - The first thing they did after being released was pray. We should learn from the disciples that prayer is very powerful. We see that God listened to their prayer, and the whole place was shaken.
 - They did not ask the Lord to protect them, but rather to strengthen them so that the preaching may succeed. This shows their desire to spread the faith. They were not thinking of themselves, but asked for strength to glorify God through it.
- **Chapter 5: read from verse 1-31**
 - **Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11)**

- Although it was within their rights to keep part of the money and give the other part, their sin was hypocrisy and love of appearance, which led to lying. By lying, they were considered as stealing part of God's money, claiming they had given the full price of the land.
- **Verse 3:** Peter declared to Ananias the seriousness of giving in to Satan, who had filled his heart with the desire for recognition. This means Ananias could have rejected the evil thoughts of Satan, but he was careless due to his pride.
- **Contemplation:** 'Against You, I have sinned' (Psalm 51:4).
Do not forget the presence of God. Remind yourself that He is standing before you, seeing all your actions, words, and thoughts. Even if you fall, quickly repent to Him—He will forgive you."
- **Miracles performed by the apostles, followed by their trial. (Verses 12-31):**
 - New believers continued to join, but their number was not mentioned this time as it was before when it said five thousand, because the number had increased greatly.
 - Now we see the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples had previously failed to heal the demon-possessed boy at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:19), but now they were able to heal all kinds of diseases and cast out demons—even through touch or just the shadow.
 - **Verse 19:** An angel of the Lord came at night, opened the prison door, and brought them out. He instructed them to go and continue preaching. Their release from prison was not an escape, but rather to continue their ministry in the temple, proclaiming eternal life.
 - Contrary to what the Sanhedrin expected, the **apostles went out with joy and enthusiasm for greater preaching**. They considered the suffering of being beaten as sharing in the sufferings of Christ and a preparation for the glory of heaven.
 - The apostles continued steadfast in teaching in the temple and in homes, in the name of the Lord. They held the liturgies and Christian rituals in homes, as churches had not yet been built.
- **Chapter 6: 1-8**
 - **Ordaining deacons (Acts 6: 1-8)**
 - The ordained seven deacons:
 - Number seven: it is one of the sacred numbers that symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit, such as the seven sacraments of the Church.
 - **Qualifications of deacons:**
 - Good reputation': They are known for their uprightness and fairness.
 - Full of the Holy Spirit
 - Wisdom': Good judgment
 - **Verse 6:** Ordination was carried out by the apostles through prayer and the laying of hands, and this same process continues today in our Church.

- Here is a clear declaration of the sacrament of priesthood in the ordination of one of the priestly ranks, which is the diaconate. This practice has continued in the Church to this day
- **The arrest of Stephen (Acts 6:12-15)**

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- **Reading:**

- **Chapters 7-12**
 - Read chapter 7 from 44-60
 - Read Chapter 8 from 1-4, 26-40
 - Read Chapter 9 from 1-31, 36-43
 - Read Chapter 10 from 25-43
 - Read Chapter 11: no readings from chapter 11
 - Read Chapter 12 from 1-25

- **Resources:**

- The Book of Acts - Fr. Daoud Lamei English

- **Key verse:**

- "But the word of God grew and multiplied." *Acts 12:24*

- **Comments:**

- **Acts 7**
 - **St. Stephen's speech (Acts 7: 44-53)**
 - Ver 48, God's presence is not confined to the temple; He does not dwell in a building, but in the hearts of His children who believe in Him.
 - He revealed to the Jews that the hardness of their hearts. Their worship and circumcision were only outward and superficial, without touching their hearts or ears to listen to Christ. The Jews rejected the testimony of the Holy Spirit about Christ in the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets, and even killed the prophets.
 - **Contemplation:** In the same way, a person loses every blessing when they refuse to obey the Holy Scriptures.
 - **The stoning of St. Stephen (Acts 7:54-60):**
 - While the Jews were stoning Stephen, he remained calm and prayerful, asking God to receive his spirit to dwell with Him in heaven. This shows the strength of his faith and his steadfastness in the final moments of his

life.

- St. Stephen's vision of our Lord Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of God was also mentioned in several other places in the bible (old and new testament)
 - **Mark 16:19:** So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.
 - **Ephesians 1:20:** Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.
 - **Psalm 110:1** The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.
- **Discussion:**
 - **What made his speech so powerful?** as mentioned in verse 55, he, being full of the Holy Spirit.
 - **What can we learn from his forgiveness?** He followed Christ's example by praying for his enemies and showing love toward them
- **Acts 8**
 - **The Church is scattered and Saul persecutes. (Acts 8: 1-4)**
 - **Saul**, a Jewish man from Tarsus and the tribe of Benjamin, was around 40 years old in the early first century. Well-educated, he strongly supported the persecution of Christians.
 - Verse 4, The Christians who were scattered from Jerusalem, in their travels, were not afraid of the Jews. Instead, they continued to preach the word of God in joy, despite the persecution they had endured.
 - **Contemplation:** Truly, the Lord turns sorrow into joy and spiritual gain, and He controls all the events of life to work for our salvation.
 - **How did God use persecution for His plan?** The persecution forced believers to leave Jerusalem, spreading the Gospel to new places.
 - **Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40):**
 - The Holy Spirit led Philip to go to the Ethiopian eunuch.
 - Baptism is essential for salvation:
 - First: Baptism performed by immersion in water.
 - Second: Accepting the faith. when the Ethiopian Eunuch said " I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"
- **Acts 9**
 - **The conversion of Saul (Acts 9: 1-31)**
 - **The encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ (1-9)**
 - God revealed to Saul that the one speaking to him was Jesus, showing him that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 - Saul then spent three days blind, fasting, and praying, deeply reflecting on the event.
 - **Ananias and Saul's healing (10-19)**
 - **Ananias** was a devout Christian living in **Damascus**, known for his good reputation among the Jews there. He plays a key role in the conversion of **Saul of Tarsus**

- **Verse 18**, Scales fell from Saul's eyes, symbolizing the removal of sin that blinded him from Christ. He immediately regained his sight and was baptized by Ananias.
- **Saul begins to preach (20-31)**
 - Saul began preaching in the Jewish synagogues about Christ and His divinity. However, after his baptism, he went to the Arabian desert near Damascus, where he spent three years in solitude. During that time, Christ appeared to him and entrusted him with the faith and the holy mysteries (Galatians 1:16-18). He then returned to Damascus to begin his ministry.
- **Peter heals and raises the dead. (Acts 9: 36-43):**
 - Peter didn't rush or perform a show—he **knelt and prayed** before raising Tabitha. This shows us the power of prayers.
- **Acts 10**
 - **The gentiles receive the gospel (25-43)**
 - St. Peter meets Cornelius, a Gentile, and realizes that God shows no partiality but accepts all who fear Him and seek righteousness. Peter humbly refuses worship, emphasizing that he is just a man, and boldly proclaims the Gospel of Jesus—His life, death, resurrection, and the offer of forgiveness to all who believe. This moment marks a turning point, revealing that salvation is for all nations, not just the Jews.
- **Acts 12**
 - **Peter's arrest (Acts 12:1-25)**
 - While Herod arrests Peter and kills James to please the people, the Church prays earnestly—and God miraculously frees Peter from prison, showing that no chains or guards can stop His will.
 - Herod, who sought glory for himself, is struck down by God, reminding us that pride leads to destruction.

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Week 4: Beginning of missionary trips

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- **Reading:**

- Chapters 13-20

- **Resources:**

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- **Key verse:**

- "I have set you to be a light of the nations, for you to be for salvation to the end of the earth." Acts 13:47

- **Comments:**

- **Introduction about St. Paul**

- St. Paul wrote 14 epistles out of the 27 books in the New Testament.
- Known as the Apostle of the Gentiles.
- Received 4 crowns: martyrdom, purity, apostleship, and righteousness.
- Early preparation for ministry:
 - **Roman Citizen:** enabling him for safe travel and legal protection.
 - **Greek education:** Exposure to Greek philosophy
 - **Jewish heritage:** Adhering to Jewish law and traditions and studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem.

○

- **1st Journey (44 AD, 2 years):**

- Asia Minor (Turkey), with Barnabus and St. Mark.
- After this journey, a council is held among the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem to determine that the gentile converts need not submit to the law of Moses regarding circumcision.

- **2nd Journey (51 AD, 3 years):**

- Mainly in Macedonia (Greece), with Silas and Luke.
- 2 Epistles: 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

- **3rd Journey (54 AD, 4 years):**

- Asia minor and Macedonia
- 4 Epistles: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians.

- **4th Journey (Rome):**

- 8 Epistles: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, **Philemon, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Hebrews.**



- **Acts 13**

- **First missionary trip: Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13: 1-5)**

- 1st Journey: Lasted for 2 years from 44AD
 - Started from Antioch (Syria) to Cyprus to the other Antioch in Pisidia (Turkey)
- This part highlights the significance of fasting and prayer
- The act of laying hands on the servants demonstrates the Church's authority in appointing and guiding individuals for ministry. Additionally, being sent by the Holy Spirit in verse 4, confirms that their mission was divinely ordained, not self-initiated.
- **Discussion:**

- **What does it mean to be "called" by God?** as mentioned in verse 2, To be called by God means to offer your life fully to Him—surrendering your plans, desires, and time to follow His will.
- **The ministry in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:13-39):**
 - The two apostles traveled by sea to the coast of what is now Turkey. At this point, St. Mark departed from them and returned to Jerusalem. St. Luke does not mention the reason for Mark's departure, but later we learn that the Apostle Paul was upset by it. However, Barnabas tried to excuse Mark's actions, which eventually led to a disagreement between him and Paul (Acts 15:37-39). Despite this, Paul later showed love and trust toward Mark again (2 Timothy 4:11).
 - Verse 33, St. Paul testified and spoke about the divinity of Christ that He is the eternal Son of God, who was born in the flesh at a specific point in time to save the world through His death and resurrection.
- **The Jews rejected the word of God (Acts 13: 45-52)**
 - Ver 47, "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles...." ask yourself how can this verse apply to me?
 - I can shine God's light to those around me through my words, behavior, appearance, and actions.
- **Acts 14**
 - **Signs and wonders in Iconium. (Acts 14: 1-10)**
 - Continuation of the 1st missionary trip
 - Healing of the cripple man
 - **Contemplation:** If you let God lead your life and follow His path, He will work wonders through you and reveal His power in amazing ways.
 - **Stoning of St. Paul and completion of the 1st missionary trip (Acts 14:19-28):**
 - Verse 24, "prayed with fasting" again it shows the importance of prayer and fasting in our life
 - They made many disciples after preaching in these cities, **so they appointed priests** and organized the ministry in the churches.
- **Acts 15**
 - **The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15: 1-12)**
 - The believers from Jewish origin were arguing, saying that in order to become Christian you have to be Jewish first by submitting to the law of Moses and be circumcised first.
 - The leaders of the church (the apostles and elders), which is now represented by the Holy Synod, got together to solve this issue and stated that the law of Moses and Jewish traditions was symbolic traditions to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our salvation comes only from the blood of Jesus Christ through His death and resurrections.
 - Ver 8-9, Peter explained how the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles even before they were baptized, showing that God approved their baptism without the need for circumcision or keeping the Law of Moses.
 - **The Council's decisions (Acts 15: 22-29)**
 - **2nd missionary trip (Acts 15:36-41)**

- Paul suggested to Barnabas that they go on a second missionary journey to visit the believers they had preached to during their first journey and to check on how they were doing.
- **Acts 16**
 - **2nd missionary trip (Acts 16: 1-15)**
 - 2nd trip: St. Paul and Timothy
 - The second missionary journey was marked by the beginning of evangelism in Europe.
 - The journey began from Antioch (in Syria) and continued overland to Tarsus (Turkey), to Neapolis in Europe.
 - This second journey is recorded in the Book of Acts from chapter 15 -18 and lasted approximately three and a half years, from 51 AD to 54 AD.
 - In this part we see that God directed St. Paul through the vision of the Macedonian man.
 - **Paul and Silas imprisoned and freed (Acts 16: 22-40)**
 - Verse 25, Paul and Silas prayed and praised God, teaches us that praising and praying to God in the midst of suffering is very powerful act that can inspire others.
- **Acts 17**
 - **St. Paul preaching the word of God in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens (Acts 17:1-9)**
 - **Main points from the sermon of St. Paul (Acts 17: 22-34)**
 - Verse 24, God is the creator
 - Verse 25, God is self-sufficient
 - Verse 27, Seek God, He is not far
 - Verse 30, Repent
- **Acts 18**
 - **St. Paul in Corinth (Acts 18: 1:11)**
 - Aquila: a Christian of Jewish origin, Priscilla: his wife. They were originally from Pontus Turkey
 - **The End of the Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:18-22)**
 - St. Paul ended his missionary journey by revisiting some of the cities where he had previously preached, encouraging and strengthening the believers, before returning to Antioch in Syria.
 - **The 3rd missionary trip (Acts 18: 23-28)**
 - Asia minor and Macedonia
 - Paul remained in Antioch for less than a year before beginning his third missionary journey, following his usual path through regions in Turkey and then into Europe. This journey lasted from the year 54 AD to 58 AD.
- **Acts 19**
 - **Paul's Ministry in Ephesus and His Miracles (Acts 19:1-12):**
 - Paul corrected incomplete teaching and gave proper Christian baptism.
 - **God performed extraordinary miracles** through Paul: even **handkerchiefs and aprons** that had touched him healed the sick and cast out evil spirits.
- **Acts 20**

- **The Move to Greece and the Raising of Eutychus (Acts 20: 1-12)**
 - After his ministry in Ephesus, **Paul traveled to Greece**, where he stayed for three months, strengthening the believers and facing plots from the Jews.
 - During his journey from **Troas**, he was preaching for many hours, and a young man named **Eutychus** was sitting by a window. As Paul continued speaking late into the night, Eutychus fell asleep, fell from the third floor, and died.
 - **Paul went down, embraced him, and brought him back to life by the power of Jesus Christ**, reassuring everyone that he was alive.
- **Paul's sermon to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:17-38):**
 - He reminded them of his faithful service to God **with humility, tears, and trials**, and how he **preached the full truth** without holding anything back.
 - Paul warned them to **watch over themselves and the flock**, because **false teachers** would arise even from among them.
 - He ended by reminding them of Jesus' words: ***"It is more blessed to give than to receive."***

1. Review/recap questions

** Servant may add more questions

8. Homework

** Servant may add more questions

Week 5: St. Paul's trials

- **Brief introduction about St. Luke and the Book of Acts:**

- St. Luke accompanied the St. Paul on his missionary journeys, so he accurately narrated what he witnessed. Being a physician, he also described events in detail.
- He did not conclude the book of Acts with "Amen" like the other books because the *Synaxarion* (Church calendar of saints and events) comes after it, serving as the continuation of the Church's history beyond the Book of Acts.
- The Church reads the **Synaxarion** (the lives of the saints of the day) after the Book of Acts during the liturgy, to declare that the Word of the Lord continues to grow and multiply in His holy Church.
- The placement of the Book of Acts between the **Gospels** and the **Epistles** serves as a connection between them: the Gospels present the life of Christ, the Book of Acts shows the preaching of the Gospel, and the Epistles reflect how to live according to the Gospel.

- **Introduction:**

- **Author:** St. Luke
- **Time of writing:**
 - It was written around the year 63 AD in Rome, after he had written his Gospel. It covers a period of about thirty years—from the Ascension of Christ to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.
- **Purpose of the book**
 - A clear record of the ministry of Peter and Paul.
 - Demonstrates the behavior of the early Christians as high examples for us.
 - Shows the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling Christ's promises and establishing the Church.
 - Displays the divinity of the Son.
 - Proclaims the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

- **Outline**

- ◦ **Chapter 1** – *The Apostles in Jerusalem from the Ascension to Pentecost:*
Includes the selection of Matthias and the worship of the Church.
- **Chapters 2-7** – *The Beginning of Evangelism until the Martyrdom of Stephen:*
Includes the gifts of the Spirit, the growth of the Church, the healing of the lame man, threats against the apostles, the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the imprisonment of the apostles, the selection of seven deacons, and the stoning of Stephen.
- **Chapters 8-12** – *The Persecution of the Church in Jerusalem:*
Includes the faith of the Ethiopian eunuch, the conversions of Paul and

Cornelius, the founding of the Church in Caesarea, the martyrdom of James, the imprisonment of Peter, and the death of Herod.

- **Chapters 13-15** – *The Evangelism of Paul and Barnabas Until Their Separation:*

Includes the story of Elymas the sorcerer, the Church in Antioch, the healing of the lame man in Lystra, the stoning of Paul, and the First Council of Jerusalem.

- **Chapters 16-20** – *Paul's Preaching in Europe*

- **Chapters 21-28** – *Paul's Trials:*

Includes his journey to Jerusalem, his arrest and transfer to stand trial in Rome, his trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, the shipwreck in Malta, and finally his arrival in Rome and preaching there for two years.

- **Reading:**

- Chapters 21-28

- **Resources:**

- The Book of Acts - Fr. Daoud Lamei English

- **Key verse:**

- "I have set you to be a light of the nations, for you to be for salvation to the end of the earth." Acts 13:47

- **Comments:**

- **Introduction about St. Paul**

- St. Paul wrote 14 epistles out of the 27 books in the New Testament.
- Known as the Apostle of the Gentiles.
- Received 4 crowns: martyrdom, purity, apostleship, and righteousness.
- Early preparation for ministry:
 - **Roman Citizen:** enabling him for safe travel and legal protection.
 - **Greek education:** Exposure to Greek philosophy
 - **Jewish heritage:** Adhering to Jewish law and traditions and studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem.

- ## Missionary Journeys

- **1st Journey (44 AD, 2 years):**

- Asia Minor (Turkey), with Barnabus and St. Mark.
 - After this journey, a council is held among the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem to determine that the gentile converts need not submit to the law of Moses regarding circumcision.

- **2nd Journey (51 AD, 3 years):**

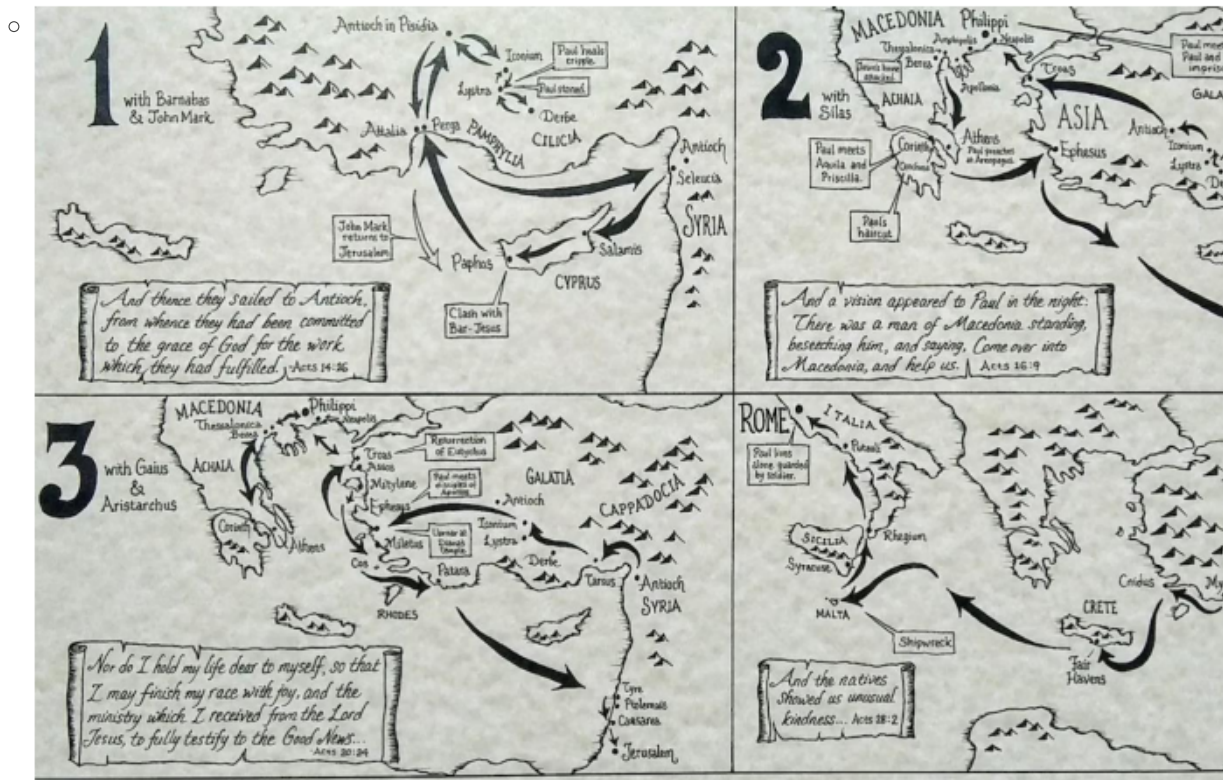
- Mainly in Macedonia (Greece), with Silas and Luke.
 - 2 Epistles: 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

- **3rd Journey (54 AD, 4 years):**

- Asia minor and Macedonia
 - 4 Epistles: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians.

- **4th Journey (Rome):**

- 8 Epistles: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, **Philemon, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Hebrews.**
-



- Acts 21

- Paul goes to Jerusalem and is arrested

- St. Paul journey toward Jerusalem despite warnings (Acts 21: 1-5)

- St. Paul knew danger awaited him in Jerusalem, but obeyed God's will anyway.
 - His courage shows faith over fear.

- St. Paul is falsely accused and arrested in the temple (Acts 21: 21-40)

- Arrested in the temple, yet he stayed calm and focused on sharing the Gospel.

- Acts 22

- ST. Paul's defense before the Jews (Acts 22: 1-21)

- St. Paul spoke to them in Hebrew to show them, his respect and connection to his Jewish roots
 - He shares his personal story, his zeal, conversion, and calling. His testimony reveals that God can transform anyone.

- St. Paul reveals his Roman citizenship (Acts 22: 25-30):

- This shows that being spiritual does not mean being naïve, you can use your rights to defend yourself

- Acts 23

- St. Paul divides the council by mentioning the resurrection (Acts 23: 6-12)

- The Pharisees believe in spirits and the resurrection, while the others, the Sadducees, do not believe in that. They think that the soul dies with the body and does not rise

- On the following night, the Lord appeared to Paul to comfort and encourage him, and also to tell him that he would go to preach in Rome
- The rest of the Chapter:
 - A group of Jews plots to kill Paul.
 - Paul's nephew hears of the plot and warns him.
 - The commander sends Paul under heavy guard to Governor Felix in Caesarea for safety.
- **Acts 24**
 - **Paul's Trial Before Felix (Acts 24: 1-21)**
 - Tertullus accused Paul of three charges and considered him a corrupter and harmful to society.
 - Another accusation that Tertullus brought against Paul was that he had defiled the temple.
 - **St. Paul defended himself saying:**
 - He had only arrived in Jerusalem twelve days earlier, most of which he spent imprisoned because of the Jews.
 - He came to worship in the temple. Therefore, he respected worship in the temple and was not defiling it as they accused him.
- **Acts 25**
 - **Festus takes over and hears Paul's case (Acts 25: 1-12)**
 - Paul appeals to Caesar
 - St. Paul never missed an opportunity to spread the ministry, even in Rome, the capital. His personal case did not occupy his mind, but rather how he could go to Rome to preach the Gospel
- **Acts 26**
 - **Paul Testifies Before Agrippa (Acts 26: 1-23)**
 - **Personal Testimony:** He recounts his past as a persecutor, his encounter with Christ, and his mission to preach.
 - **Focus on the Resurrection:** The first resurrection from the dead, Christ was not the first to rise from the dead—many before Him in the Old Testament had been raised, and He Himself raised many. However, He is the first to rise by His own power and enter Paradise and the Kingdom. The others returned to Hades because Christ had not yet completed the redemption.
 - Agrippa almost believes: "You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Verse 28)
 - Paul is found innocent but must go to Caesar
- **Acts 27**
 - **St. Paul sails to Rome; the storm intensifies (Acts 27:14-26):**
 - Here we compare Paul, who through his obedience to God became a reason for the salvation of the ship's passengers, with the prophet Jonah, who through his disobedience to God became a source of trouble for the ship's passengers—until they threw him into the sea, and the storm calmed down.
 - Shipwrecked at Malta, all survive
- **Acts 28**

- ○ **St. Paul Heals and ministers in Malta (Acts 28: 1-10)**
 - Paul turns a shipwreck into a mission field
- **St. Paul arrives to Rome and stays under house arrest (Acts 28: 11-16)**
- **St. Paul preaching in Rome (Acts 28: 17-31)**
 - Even in chains, St. Paul preaches boldly and freely. His house becomes a church, showing that **no barrier can stop the Gospel**.
- Paul continued to preach boldly while awaiting trial, without fear or complaint. Though God allowed him to face hardship and imprisonment, He remained with him, using every situation to spread the Gospel. The Book of Acts ends with the message reaching **Rome**, fulfilling Christ's promise to reach the **ends of the earth** (Acts 1:8).
After his first release from prison, Paul preached for five more years before being arrested again. During his second imprisonment in Rome, he wrote **2 Timothy**, and was **martyred in A.D. 68**.

1. Review/recap questions

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